An Examination of Attachment Styles and Social Skills of University Students

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Abstract

Introduction. Attachment organization across the lifespan and across generations, long-term predictions from attachment organization to later psychosocial functioning, and the possibility of altering attachment organization with intervention suggest that attachment theory may potentially shed valuable light on adult social development and deviant behavior. In this article are planned that to examine social skills and attachment styles of university students in Turkey.

Method. A sample of 343 university students completed measures of Relationships Scale Questionnaire and Social Skills Inventory. To analyze data, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were employed.

Results. Result indicated that secure attachment and social skills are related on several significant dimensions. Regression analyses indicated that a significant effect of attachment styles on social skills was detected. There found positive significant relation between secure attachment style and emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity and social control scores. There found a negative relation between fearful attachment style scores and social control and emotional expressivity scores and a positive relation between fearful attachment style and social sensitivity scores. No significant relation was found between other attachment styles and social skills scores. It was found out that secure attachment style predicted emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, social expressivity, and social control skills. It was also found that fearful and dismissing attachment style predicted emotional sensitivity skill, and preoccupied attachment style predicted social control.

Discussion and Conclusion. As a result of the study, there found a significant relation between attachment styles and social skills of students attending education faculty and it was determined that attachment styles predicted social skills. Considering this case, teacher trainees can be trained to raise their awareness about attachment styles and development of social skills. Especially, pre-school and elementary teacher candidates can be trained to set a good role model for their prospective students.

Key Words: Attachment Style, Social Skills, University Students, University Education.

Un Examen de los Estilos de Apego y Habilidades Sociales de los Estudiantes Universitarios

Resumen

Introducción. La organización del apego a través de toda la vida y de las generaciones, las predicciones a lo largo plazo de la organización del apego al posterior funcionamiento psicosocial y la posibilidad de alterar la organización de apego con la intervención sugieren que la teoría de apego potencialmente podría arrojar valiosa luz sobre el desarrollo social de los adultos y la conducta desviada. Este estudio pretende investigar el estilo de apego y las habilidades sociales de los estudiantes universitarios en Turquía.

Método. En el estudio participaron 343 estudiantes universitarios y las mediciones se llevaron a cabo mediante una encuesta de la escala de relación y el inventario de habilidades sociales. En el análisis de datos, se utilizaron análisis de correlación y análisis de regresión.

Resultados. Se encontraron relaciones significativas entre el apego seguro y algunas dimensiones inferiores de habilidades sociales. Según el análisis de regresión, se determinó que los estilos de apego tienen una influencia significativa en las habilidades sociales. Se determinó que existe una relación positiva significativa entre el estilo de apego seguro y el expresionismo afectivo, la sensibilidad afectiva, el control afectivo, el expresionismo social y punto de control social. Entre el estilo de apego ansioso y el control social y puntos del expresionismo afectivo, una relación negativa significativa y entre el estilo de apego ansioso y puntos de sensibilidad social, se encontró una relación positiva significativa. Entre los otros estilos de apego y puntos de habilidades sociales no se encontró ninguna relación. Se encontró que el estilo de apego seguro predice el expresionismo afectivo, la sensibilidad afectiva, el expresionismo social y las habilidades de control social. Resultó que el estilo de apego seguro predice el expresionismo afectivo, la sensibilidad afectiva, el expresionismo social y las habilidades de control social. Además se encontró que el estilo de apego ansioso y desdeñoso predice la habilidad de sensibilidad social y el estilo de apego obsesivo predice el control social.

Discusión y conclusiones. Como resultado de este estudio, una relación significativa entre los estilos de apego y las habilidades sociales de los estudiantes de la Facultad de Educación y se determinó que los estilos de apego predicen las habilidades sociales. Teniendo en cuenta esta

circunstancia, la educación recibida por los futuros profesores podría crear conciencia del desarrollo de habilidades sociales y estilos de apego. Especialmente los maestros practicantes de escuela primera y preescolar tienen que ser educados para ser un buen modelo para los alumnos a quienes educan.

Introduction

Once a baby is born, he/she needs the existence of an adult to protect it and to meet its basic needs and the need for love. The person who meets its needs is generally the mother who gave birth to the child and brings it up (Ainsworth, 1967). The sensitivity of mother towards her baby (meeting her needs on time), her approachability, acceptance of her baby, her communication with the baby and reactivity (Posada, Carbonell, Alzate & Plata, 2004), lead to the formation of an emotional connection between mother and baby (Ainsworth, 1967). Bowlby called this emotional connection between the mother and the child as attachment. Attachment is defined as emotional connections people develop towards individuals who they regard to be important for themselves (Bowlby, 1973, 1980).

According to Bowlby (1973), children internalize their connection experiences with their mothers and these early experiences direct the child ' s relations later. These connections makes it easier internal representations or alias their own and others ' models which help individuals to understand and predict their environment which include vital conditions such as feeling of psychological security and maintaining closeness (Bretherton, 1985). This first sample internalized later forms the basis for relations in the future (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Shaver & Fraley, 2000). Ainsworth (1989) states that the attachment styles which are shaped with relation babies develop with their parents will generally be repeated in close relation they will develop when they grow up.

Hazan & Shaver (1987) conceptualized romantic attachment as an attachment style and argued that three attachment styles in childhood can reappear in adolescence and adulthood in romantic and marriage relations and developed a simple scale based Ainsworth ' s definitions of three child attachment styles (Cooper, Shaver & Collins, 1998). Another important contribution to adult attachment styles was made by Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991). They developed four styles of attachment model to explain self and attachment figure model. According to this model, people have a working model towards themselves as well as towards other people. Four attachment styles are obtained from the crossing of positive and negative mental representations of self and others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Secure individuals are generally happy with their relations and they have the feeling of accepted by others. They think that other people are favorable, trustworthy and are worth

being loved (Feeney, 1998; Burger, 2006). As these individuals find other people worth loving, reliable and altruistic (Collins & Read, 1990), they tend to relax by receiving support from others when they come across a problem (cited in Kart, 2002). Lieberman (1977) observed that while the children who attach their mothers safely tend to display behaviors like being more sharing, providing social support and display less negative behaviors such as physical-verbal assault, crying Preoccupied individuals are not confident. Their opinions about people are negative and they have conflicts in their relations (Collins, 1996). Fearful individuals have low self-confidence and do not ask for help form others when they experience stress because they do not trust others (Sümer & Güngör, 1999; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Dismissing type has difficulty in telling their problems to others as they do not trust others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment theory has led to great strides in understanding the development of social behavior and psychopathology in infancy and early childhood, however, attachment styles impact of social development begins to be seen in adolescence and adulthood. A broad array of findings including demonstrated continuities in attachment organization across the lifespan and across generations, long-term predictions from attachment organization to later psychosocial functioning, and the possibility of altering attachment organization with intervention suggest that attachment theory may potentially shed valuable light on adult social development and deviant behavior (Bowlby, 1969, 1982)

Riggio (1986) divides social skill into six dimensions as emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity, social sensitivity and social control. Emotional expressivity refers to the skills of individuals to express their non-verbal communication skills, especially skills of sending emotional messages, in expressing the direction of non-verbal expression in interpersonal communication and emotional conditions fully, emotional sensivity in receiving, understanding and interpreting others ' non-verbal messages; emotional control in arranging and controlling their emotional and non-verbal reactions. Social expressivity refers to the skills of an individual to express their skills in social communication and in engaging in communication, social sensivity receiving, understanding and interpreting others verbal communications (social sensitivity), social control playing social roles and social expression, behaving appropriate to any social occasion, being self-confident and being able to easily adapt to any social occasion. Human beings interact with his/her environment by developing social relations. In the process of

interaction, people can only develop robust relations by acquiring social skills adequately (Deniz, 2002).

Questions of this study

Cassidy, Kirsh and Scolton (1996) stated that social skills are related with each other and attachment styles are a good predictor of social skills. Based on these statements, in this study the relation between students ' attachment styles and social skill scores and whether attachment styles predict social skill scores was examined. With this in mind, answers for the following questions were sought.

1. Is there a significant relation between attachment styles and social skill scores?

2. Do their attachment styles explain their social skill scores?

Method

Participants

The study was designed in survey model to determine the relation between attachment styles and social skill scores and the explanatory power of attachment styles for social skills. The study group is composed of 343 voluntary students randomly chosen among students at Education Faculty of Selcuk University. The students ' age mean is 20.

Instruments

Social Skills Inventory (SSI): The SSI developed by Riggio (1986), revised by Riggio (1989), and adapted to Turkish participants by Yüksel (1997) was used to obtain data related to the social skills of participants. The SSI is a 90 items Likert type inventory of self-report to measure basic social skills. The SSI consists of six subscales. Reliability studies of SSI were performed by the Retst Method and the reliability coefficients for subscales varied between .80 and .89. The Cronbach ' s Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the social skill subscales varied between .56 and .82. In the validation of the scale, similar scales validation was applied and Self- Regulation scale developed by Synder and adapted into Turkish by Bacanlı (1990) was used. There found a correlation of .63 between the scores from the scales. Besides, experts stated that the scale could measure social scales (Ekinci, 2006).

Relationships Scales Questionnaire (RSQ): The RSQ developed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) and adapted to Turkish participants by Sumer and Güngör (1999). The RSQ is a 17 items Likert type scale measure four different attachment styles (secure, dismissing, fearful, and preoccupied). The reliability coefficients of the scale were calculated by the Retst Method and varied between .54 and .78. The parallel form validity of this scale was tested with the Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and the correlation coefficients varied between .49 and .61(Sumer and Güngör, 1999).

Procedure

Attachment Styles and Social Skills Scales were applied to various parts of Selcuk University Faculty of Education. The research is survey model. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The study group is composed of 343 voluntary students randomly chosen among students.

Statistical Analyze

Multiple Varible Regression Analysis, Pearson Correlation Coefficients were employed to analyze the data obtained by inventories used in the research. The SPSS 11.0 package was used in the analysis of data.

Results

In the study, first of all the relation between attachment styles and social skill, later on whether attachment styles explained social skill scores was examined and the results are given below.

Table 1. *The Relation between Attachment Styles and Social Skill Scores*

Attachment	Emotional Expressivity	Emotional Sensitivity	Emotional Control	Social Expressivity	Social Sensitivity	Social Control
Secure	,248***	,314***	,111*	,308***	-,041	,378***
Fearful	-,166**	,005	,005	-,101	,127*	-,173***
Dismissing	,039	,103	,065	,005	,087	-,056
Preoccupied	-,002	,009	-,038	-,013	,089	-,085

***p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

When the table is examined , it is seen that there is a positive significant relation between students' secure attachment styles scores and emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, social

expressivity, social control scores (p<.001). In a similar way, there found a significant positive relation between secure attachment style and emotional control scores (p<.01). There found negative significant relation between fearful attachment style scores and social control scores (p<.001). There found negative significant relation between fearful attachment style scores and emotional expressivity scores (p<.01), and positive significant relation between social sensitivity (p<.05). There found no relation between dismissing, preoccupied attachment style scores and emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity, social sensitivity, social control scores (p>05).

Table 2. *Explanatory and Predictive Powers of Attachment Styles for Social Skills*

Dependent Variable	**R²**	F	Attachment Styles	β	t
Emotional Expressivity	,075	6,882***	Secure	.389	3,893***
			Fearful	.135	-1,623
			Dismissing	.121	1,604
			Preoccupied	-.053	-,339
Emotional Sensitivity	,135	13,203***	Secure	.150	6,953***
			Fearful	.056	2,384*
			Dismissing	.067	2,328*
			Preoccupied	-.061	-1,016
Emotional Control	,024	2,059			
			Secure	.332	5,811***
Social Expressivity	,100	9,461***	Fearful	.026	,450
			Dismissing	.037	,703
			Preoccupied	-.062	-1,165
Social Sensitivity	,027	2,349			
			Secure	.398	7,224***
Social Control	,164	16,597***	Fearful	-.001	-,015
			Dismissing	-.017	-,326
			Preoccupied	-.145	-2,825*

***p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

The effects of attachment styles on social skills were examined by a multiple variable regression analysis and result are given in table 2. Result show that attachment styles explain emotional expressivity (F=6,882) emotional sensitivity (F=13.203), social expressivity (F=9.461), social control skills (F=16.597). Attachment styles do not explain emotional control (F=2.059) and social sensitivity (F=2.349). Attachment styles account for 7,5% of total variance in emotional expressivity, 13,5 % of total variance emotional sensitivity, 10% of total variance in social expressivity and 16,4 % of total variance in social control. When t-test results with regard to the significance of regression coefficients are examined, it is see that secure attachment style predict emotional expressivity (t=3,893 β=.389), emotional sensitivity (t=6,953, β=.150), social expressivity (t=5,811, β=.332) and social control (t=7,224, β=.398) skills to a significant extent. Besides, fearful and dismissing attachment styles have a deterministic power in emotional sensitivity (t=2,384, β=.056 ; t=2,328, β=.067).

It is seen that preoccupied style explain social control (t=-2,825, β=-.145). Low social control level is related with preoccupied attachment style.

Discussion and Conclusion

A significant relation between students ' attachment styles and social skills was found. There found positive significant relation between secure attachment style and emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity and social control scores. Because these people find other people worth loving, reliable and altruistic (Collins & Read, 1990), they tend to relax by receiving help from other when they face a problem (Grossman & Grossman, 1998, cited in Kart, 2002; Büyükşahin, 2006). Because they have high self-esteem and enjoy social interaction, individuals with secure attachment styles are likely to have ample opportunities to develop and hone their social skills (Guerrero & Jones, 2003). There found a negative relation between fearful attachment style scores and social control and emotional expressivity scores and a positive relation between fearful attachment style and social sensitivity scores. No significant relation was found between other attachment styles and social skills scores. Considering that people with fearful attachment style do not trust themselves but others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), it is not surprising that they are open to social sensitivity. The study by Deniz, Hamarta and Ari (2005) supports this finding. This study found that secure attachment styles between emotional expressivity, social expressivity, social sensitivity, social control significant correlation. In the same study, they found negative relation between fearful attachment style and emotional expressivity and social control, and a positive significant relation between fearful attachment and social sensitivity.

DiTommaso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross and Burgess (2002) found that significant relation between secure attachment scores and emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, social expressivity and social control. However, there found a negative relation between secure attachment and social sensitivity. There found a low relation between dismissing attachment and emotional expressivity, social expressivity. Preoccupied attachment showed a weak relation with all social skill sub dimensions except for social sensitivity. There found a low significant relation between fearful attachment style and emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, social expressivity and social control.

It was found out that secure attachment style predicted emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, social expressivity, and social control skills. It was also found that fearful and dismissing attachment style predicted emotional sensitivity skill, and preoccupied attachment style predicted social control. Deniz, Hamarta and Ari (2005) found that secure attachment affected emotional expressivity and social expressivity, but it did not affect other sub-dimensions of social skills. Besides, they found that other attachment styles did not affect social skills.

Cassidy, Kirsh and Scolton (1996) found out that dismissing attachment was related with low social sensitivity and social expressivity and that fearful attachment was related with high social sensitivity and rather low social expressivity. It was found out that those who have a preoccupied attachment style have higher social sensitivity and expressivity scores and that those with secure attachment have low social sensitivity scores and high social expressitivity scores. Besides, it was also determined that those who had dismissed attachment had highest scores and those with preoccupied attachment had the lowest scores in terms of social sensitivtiy. Social expressivity was detached from two positive attachment styles (dismissing and secure) and two negative attachment style (preoccupied and fearful) attachment styles.

Kobak & Sceery (1988) found out that secure individuals could seek help from others to relax and that they helped others to solve their problems and showed effort to understand others. They saw that those individuals sought social support and gave social support when needed. According to Bartholomew, dismissing people have autonomy and high self-esteem at the expense of lacking feeling of closeness. They have difficulty in telling their problems to others as they do not trust others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Dismissing people have positive ideas about themselves but they have negative ideas about people ' s nature (Collins & Read, 1990). Dismissing people seek support from other when they are under stress; however, they cannot make use of this support efficiently and show avoidance behavior (Ognibene & Collins, 1998).

Suggestions

As a result of the study, there found a significant relation between attachment styles and social skills of students attending education faculty and it was determined that attachment styles predicted social skills. Considering this case, teacher trainees can be trained to raise their awareness about attachment styles and development of social skills. Especially, pre-

school and elementary teacher candidates can be trained to set a good role model for their prospective students.

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